

PROFESSIONALIZATION OF SOCIAL WORK IN LITHUANIA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

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Abstract

Today we have a set of results, showing the entrenchment of social work in the country: social work as a profession is included into Lithuanian Classification of Occupations, we have created a network of institutions, legal basis, developed a network of social works education institutions, clear system of qualification development, the mechanism of professional support is being developed, etc. It seems that we could support A. Bagdonas (2001) statement, that creation of social work as profession in Lithuania has been finished already. So what else can one say about the nature of social work's birth and development in Lithuania what has not already been said? The questions how the ideas, that guide professional practices in social work, come into being in Lithuania and how they acquire power; and what contradictions are displayed within discursive formation of Lithuanian social work development in different sets of sources, are discussed in this article. Trying to find the answers I base on constructivist perspective, which allows spotlighting the creating process of knowledge in social work.

KEY WORDS: social work, professionalization, social construction, discourse analysis method.

Anotacija

Šiandien turime rezultatų, kurie byloja apie socialinio darbo įsitvirtinimą šalyje: socialinis darbas, kaip profesija, įtrauktas į Lietuvos profesijų klasifikatorių, sukurtas institucijų tinklas, teisinė bazė, išplėtotas socialinių darbuotojų rengimo tinklas, aiški kvalifikacijos kėlimo sistema, kuriasi profesinės paramos mechanizmas ir kt. Atrodytų, kad socialinio darbo, kaip profesijos, kūrimasis Lietuvoje jau yra pasibaigęs. Taigi, ką dar būtų galima pasakyti apie socialinio darbo atsiradimo ir vystymosi prigimtį Lietuvoje, kas dar nepasakyta ar neparašyta? Straipsnyje keliama klausimai, kaip gimsta idėjos, kurios formuoja socialinį darbą, kaip profesiją, Lietuvoje, kaip jos įsitvirtina, kokie lietuviško socialinio darbo diskurso formavimosi prieštaravimai slypi įvairiuose šaltiniuose? Ieškodama atsakymų remiuosi konstruktyvistine perspektyva, kuri leidžia išryškinti žinių kūrimosi socialiniame darbe procesą.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: socialinis darbas, profesionalizacija, socialinis konstravimas, diskurso analizės metodas.

Introduction

The world practice reveals that social work profession develops as a response to the need (Jurkuvienė, 2003, p. 18). A. S. Chambon and other (1999) argue in the Introduction of *Reading Foucault for Social Work* that the social work profession is being challenged today to adapt to changing socio-cultural circumstances and to carve out a new societal niche. The cultural and economic effects of those changes cause the reformulation of the welfare states. Because the modern identity of social work has been tied closely to the various welfare systems, it is bound to respond to all forthcoming changes.

After the restitution of Independence, which inspired a lot of changes in economic, political and social spheres, the social problems instead of decreasing increased as new ones and even more complicated: from appearance of social layers, social polarisation and poverty (Mačiulskytė, 2003), to human trafficking, child prostitution, parents' emigration and left children, etc. (Jonutytė, 2007).

The old (social) support practice became unable to cope with time conditioned challenges. These changes revealed the non-ability of inherited communist (social) support to solve rapidly increasing social problems. Personal problem started to be treated as the result of plenty of objective and subjective circumstances and it could be effectively solved only when you tried not to improve the consequences, but to remove the causes. The professionalization problem of solving social problems appeared. Let's analyse the process of social work becoming as profession in Lithuania.

L. Gvaldaitė (2007), presenting the report in conference dedicated to professional holiday of social workers, introduced the question – changing status of social work's profession. Basing on etymological meaning of the verb “profession” (*profiteri* in Latin) she formulates the following definition of professional worker: “this is such a worker, who shows, that he is properly prepared to perform a certain activity and is competent in performing it” (ibid, p. 144). Social work as profession started to take shape in 1990 in Lithuania after the restitution of Independence (Kavaliauskienė, 2005, p. 230). In the first book in Lithuania about social work I. Lukoševičienė (1996) wrote that, along with the state independence, essential social problems emerged along with the need for corresponding professional help (cited in Naujanienė, 2007, p. 9). B. Jordan (2001) studied the development of social work in Middle and East Europe during the first decade of post-communistic transformations. According to him, in Lithuania as in other countries of Middle and East Europe, „social work is the product of a certain crisis period that is the period of transformation from communism to capitalism”. J. Pivorienė (2003) stated, that social work in Lithuania formally began from social work training. It is necessary to note that from the beginning of Independence two types of social professions were developed in Lithuania: social pedagogy and social work. The rapid development of social work professionalization was noticed during the last decade, at the same time as far as social pedagogy was concerned – it's influence reduced and development slowed down. Social work, with the accompanying requirements for professional skills, fills the gaps in professional skills that are characteristic of social pedagogy (as for example V. Indrašienė, G. Kvieskienė, O. Merfeldaitė [2007] indicate the lack of team work in social educational help). The educational aspect is important in social work as well, although not as important as in social pedagogy; it is analyzed by I. Dirgėlienė (2010). She states that social work practice integrates those educational elements which contribute to the client's empowerment, and together with the psychological and social work elements creates effective integrated support methods. Meanwhile, social pedagogy, according to A. Juodaitytė (2007), survives the crisis, caused by a certain stagnation, which the author describes as non-conscious or not enough conscious evaluation of major social changes, taking place in recent decades.

When the third decade of Independence started, we can state that we have a number of results that show the entrenchment of social work in the country: social work as a profession is included in *The Lithuanian Classification of Occupations*, the network of institutions and legal framework are developed, the social workers training network is developed, clear training system, professional support mechanism are in the stage of development, etc. If we narrow the concept of profession as a

phenomenon to the identification of just mentioned elements, it is possible to maintain A. Bagdonas (2001) statement that creation of social work as the profession in Lithuania has already finished and nothing more can be said here. This periodization of social work in Lithuania, made by A. Bagdonas (2001), is supported by a number of Lithuanian scientists: V. Kavaliauskienė (2005), I. Leliūgienė, E. Giedraitienė, L. Rupšienė (2006), R. Naujanienė (2007), A. Vareikytė (2010) and others.

So, rephrasing L. Epstein (1999), what can one say about the nature of social work's birth and development in Lithuania what has not already been said? L. Epstein (1999, p. 7), declaring loyalty to Foucauldian approach in her research, argues that something much more meaningful needs to be understood about social work because it is a large and impressive social institution that has spread its influence widely, but still everybody understands it vaguely.

Foreign scientists who worked in Lithuania during the first decade of Independence and contributed to the development of social work in the country (Ritchie, 2003; Tunney, Kulys, 2004 and others), evaluated this process from the perspective of their experience. If we base on foreign authors, to them the question of social work as profession is not answered even after one hundred years of discussions (if the starting point was the question raised by A. Flexner in 1915 whether social work was a profession). Extremely intense debate concerning social work professionalization issues in the West was going on in the 20th century (6th – 8th decades) (Greenwood, 1957; Bartlett, 1970, cited in Kavaliauskienė, 2005; Baird, 1972), but even in the turn of the centuries L. C. Johnson (2001) wrote about the ongoing debate in social work as profession subject, naming the absence of “clear and comprehensive definition” as the main reason of this debate (cited in Kavaliauskienė, 2005, p. 231).

J. C. Baird (1972) formulated the concept of social work, and he named the choice of occupational criteria as the key measure when making the decision concerning naming this activity the profession or just the semi-profession. In this article I keep to the statement formulated by W. Lorenz (cited in Shardlow & Doel, 2002, p. 11), that the nature of professional activity in each country is based on the historical and cultural context of the country and is conveyed through its political, economic and social system, i.e. constructed and reconstructed when all these conditions are changing, then, there is a process, but not the result, and not the phenomenon, and I analyze the elements constructing the profession, which help to reveal the social work professionalization in Lithuania.

I refer to constructivist perspective in this research, what allows me to reveal the creating process of knowledge in social work. Self-questioning is not new to the profession (Chambon & Irving, 1999), especially to the intellectual wing based on Foucauldian approach. Foucault's fundamental suspiciousness to taken-for-granted realities had affected a number of social work scholars in Western countries, who developed a Foucauldian approach in social work research. A. Irving (1999, p. 26) warns that “things are not simply as they are, they come to be; we come to be as we are along with them”. On purpose to unravel the origins of various social work practice ideas they create what they call ‘histories of the present’, ignoring the dominant position of historians in creating and interpreting History. Within a historical perspective, H. Specht and

M. E. Courtney (1994) challenged social work to reclaim its historical roots. Within a Foucauldian perspective, V. E. Cree (1995) examined how administrative requirements intrinsically shaped the daily practice of social workers. She studied British agency's archives. H. Goldstein (1996) examined the archives of children's institution in order to reveal a connection between personal testimony and institutional history. There are a number of published collections, where are selected the works of the most famous representatives of the approach: for example, A. S. Chambon, A. Irving (1994), A. S. Chambon, A. Irving, L. Epstein (1999). R. Jurkuvienė (2003), R. Naujanienė (2007), N. P. Večkienė (2007) and others apply the constructivist approach in Lithuanian social work research; however there is not much research.

The aim of the article is to reveal the construction of social work as profession in Lithuania.

I raise specific research questions to reveal the construction of social work in Lithuania:

- 1) How the ideas that guide professional practices in social work come into being in Lithuania, and how they acquire power?
- 2) What contradictions are displayed within discursive formation of Lithuanian social work development in different sets of sources?

The object of this article is the construction of social work as profession in Lithuania.

Research methods: literature analysis, discourse analysis method is applied to reveal the construction of social work as profession in Lithuania.

1. Social work as a social construct

The main theoretical assumption in this research is that social work as a profession is socially constructed; social work practice does not exist as the phenomenon, but is created via an interaction process between the parties involved in it. It's interesting, that postmodernism and social construction perspectives were started to be applied in social work practice researches only in the last decade of 20th century (see, for example, Howe, 1994; Parton, 1994, 2002; Hall, 1997; Leonard, 1997; Meinert et al., 1998; Chambon et al., 1999; Jokinen et al., 1999; Pease & Fook, 1999; Fawcett et al., 2000; Healy, 2000; Parton & O'Byrne, 2000; Taylor & White, 2000). Overall, the turning point in relation to social work, took place around 1980, moving from positivism (searching for one correct answer) to constructivism (not trying to seek for the monopoly of truth) (Pivorienė, 2003, p. 38). In addition, the development of social construction theoretical perspectives in global social work researches is essentially the same and is caused by global social changes and increased diversified – personal, social, professional – feeling of insecurity. This theoretical perspective quickly took root in Lithuanian social work research. R. Naujanienė (2010) wrote, that social construction perspective offered a critical look at the person as a free and independent person, paying attention to the social, cultural, political, economic, environmental influences on human functioning (Ibid., p. 66). A number of other social work

researchers in Lithuania links the appearance and the development of social work profession with the response to the social needs, characteristic to the most recent country-specific historical development phase (see Lukoševičienė, 1996; Bagdonas, 2001; Jurkuvienė, 2003; Naujanienė, 2007; Večkienė, 2007, etc.).

The main idea of social construction is that the reality, which people describe in words, is socially constructed. P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann (1999) argue that reality is socially constructed, so it becomes relatively subjective. R. Naujanienė (2010) suggests that though subjectivity as well as subject is defined in many ways, this is the basic idea of social construction. Every social problem thus consists of *objective condition* and *subjective definition*. The objective condition is a verifiable situation which can be checked as to existence and magnitude by impartial and trained observers. The subjective definition is the awareness of certain individuals that the condition is a threat to certain cherished values (Fuller & Meyers, 1941, p. 320). B. Cooper (2001, p. 91) argues that subjective definitions are the different *takes* that different people bring to social situations. A range of different contexts and cultures available at any one time and place set different *takes* to social situation what suppose a plethora of different meanings, knowledge and truths available, and many experiences and self-identity. Ethnomethodology, which conceptual heritage has contributed to the development of social construction perspective, emphasizes, that the reality is constructed by reflectively using language and interaction.

The processes involved in the social construction of reality happen through networks of relationships. These networks are made of individual people where each individual embodies a complex set of unique perspectives (Cooper, 2008), and through interactions with other individuals construct ways to understand the world, as well as categories and concepts about it (Naujanienė, 2007). Global experience is understood as composed of the meanings that are given to things. From the social construction perspective the meanings are created by the context (Gubrium, Holstein, 1999; cited in Naujanienė, 2010, p. 67). G. H. Mead's (1962) conceptual position played an important role in the development of social construction perspective; according to him, people respond to social stimuli not mechanically, but using their inner mental world and subjective experience, reflect on what a particular social environment of the stimulus means for them, in this way assigning meanings to those stimuli. Assigning meanings to stimuli people subjectively modulate the behaviour that they think is suitable for particular situation. This assumption of symbolic interactionism helps to explain the relatedness of social relations and cultural environment (Layder, 1994). R. Naujanienė (2010) developing the question of context, bases on a number of authors (Burr, 1995; Gubrium, Holstein, 1999) and formulates the idea that socially constructed reality depends on the time and the place, where the reality is manifested, and the ways, in which people get the knowledge about the world together, have historical and cultural specificity.

Historical and cultural specificity can be developed at various levels. Macro-level analysis highlights the past Lithuania's historical stage of development the direct witnesses of which are we ourselves and which is rich with social context that constitutes the opportunity to observe the birth of new social institution and

development. Meso-and micro-level observations allow us to recognize the historical and cultural features of the profession birth and of a subjective personal relationship with the social environment.

N. P. Večkienė (2007), applying the theory of the social reality construction for social work research, uses D. Bell's (2003) idea, which states that the society seeks to determine the system of meanings through which people relate to the world and largely human character and the model of his social relations is determined by the type of work performed by him. Through the social work's perspective, the interconnection with the world is revealed through the elements of individual social work processes, such as the relation of social worker and the client. The meanings, significance, importance, implications, and values, that a social worker places upon a client and surrounding social circumstances, make a social worker's own world-view of his (her) role in relationship with the client. In other words, the processes of assessment are themselves increasingly recognised as constituting an intervention. Furthermore, B. Cooper (2008, p. 91) argues, "it is almost an interpersonal impossibility for there not to be changes". These processes are essentially socially and personally constructive (Parton, O'Byrne, 2000; Paris, Epting, 2004), and thereby constitute a reality for those involved in construing those realities. Everyday practice creates social reality of social work practice existing in particular society at particular time that society understands as canon. Regularly occurring events consist of habituated activities. In such a way social work can be perceived as an agreed set of understandings about the world that is an accepted and stable social reality (Berger, Luckmann, 1971, cited in Payne 2006, p. 139).

Social work is created by defining it; those involved in everyday social work interaction create social work practice naming it and giving it a meaning. Thus, the social construction takes place through human interaction under language assistance. We are sustained, or constructed, as individuals in our roles and relationships through *talk*. Furthermore, B. Cooper (2008, p. 91) argues that *talk* helps us to locate, negotiate, and maintain ourselves and our relationships within a reality that is *social*. Language is one of the main sites in which our social identities are negotiated (Humphries, 2008). So communication and negotiation in social work practice are very important assumptions, actuating change. A focus on patterns in language in use, as B. Humphries (2008, p. 122) emphasizes, reveals "the set or family of terms that are related to particular topics or activities, and the ways meanings are created or eroded as part of on-going social change. It describes this as the employment of 'interpretive repertoires' and is interested in social and cultural contexts rather than particular interactions. (...) lengthy utterances, phrases, clauses or even single words are used methodically in everyday interaction to achieve particular ends".

"Language is not innocent", as would M. MacLure (2003) state in her work. Language is not a neutral medium or vehicle for providing access to the world, or to thought (ibid, p. 180-181). B. Cooper (2008, p. 93) points out that language is the very one which makes up the foundation, builds blocks and complex structures and processes of social work. The author refers to M. Gregory and M. Holloway (2005) argument that language helps to 'shape' general sense of professional identity, and influence general understanding of what it is done when is 'done' social work: "It is

what is said; why it is said; and when and to whom, that conveys the message and the meaning of social work relationships and agreements.” Looking at particular conversation we can understand how a particular life (or lives) is constructed by what is said (Shotter, 1993). Language is not just a verbal representation of reality, as R. Naujanienė (2010) notices, basing on J. Wetheller and M. Potter (1987), it affects the functioning of the human (ibid., p. 68). A number of authors (Layder, 1994; Cooper, 2008; Naujanienė, 2010) propose to use language and other symbolic forms for the analysis of professional experience.

Active construction of meanings through language and other symbolic measures and multidimensional reality creates the assumptions to talk about deconstruction. This is the approach presented by J. Derrida in the middle of 7th decade of the 20th century. One of the most important propositions of deconstruction is that our dealings with/in the world are *unrelievedly textual* (MacLure, 2003, p. 179). However the textuality, in deconstructive sense, is not just a linguistic phenomenon or just a game of words. It carries an ethical and a political charge, since, as M. MacLure (2003) comments on M. Shapiro’s (2001) position, that deconstruction has the power to show how every social order rests on a forgetting of the exclusion practices through which one set of meanings has been institutionalised and various other possibilities have been marginalised. Deconstruction as text analysis method allows revealing internal contradictions and antagonism, in what is said or written (Naujanienė, 2010, p. 69).

Deconstruction is only one element within broad intellectual landscape of post-structuralism. M. Foucault’s works provide multiple sites from which to view the impersonal forces that play roles in construction of what a client is, what a social worker is, the rules for their interaction and how their interaction is defined. This problematization uses Foucauldian holism and poststructuralists’ views (Dreyfus & Rabonow, 1983) as multiple sights of possibility; one perspective or possibility is not viewed as more advanced, accurate, or sophisticated than the other as would be expected in a linear construction of truth oriented theory (Cannella, 1999, p. 37–38).

Language helps to create discourses, and this is Foucault’s contribution to the intellectual development of post-structuralism. Discourses facilitate and limit, enable and constrain what can be said, by whom, where and when. They may be defined as sets of statements that construct objects and array of subject positions (Parker, 1992). These constructions, in turn, make available certain ways of seeing the world and certain ways of being in the world. N. Parton (2002, p. 241) states that discourses are structures of knowledge claims and practices through which we understand, explain and decide things. In constituting agents, they also define obligations and determine the distribution of responsibilities and authorities for different categories of person, such as social workers, their clients, other officials and so on. A. S. Chambon (1999, p. 52–53) maintains that clients do not exist outside the historical activity of social work; they are the result of that activity. The starting point is not inside the client but inside social work. Discourses offer subject positions which, when taken up, have implications for subjectivity and experience (Willig, 2004, p. 171). B. Humphries (2008, p. 124–125) reminds us a Foucauldian approach, according which discourses give events meaning, i.e. subjects exist meaningfully within the discourses about

them. Moreover these discourses are historically and culturally specific, produced, regulated by the disciplinary techniques of particular societies and times. For M. Foucault (2005), discourses are practices that systematically form the objects of which we speak, and he argues that we are difference, that our reason is the difference of discourses, our history the difference of times, ourselves the difference of masks.

L. Epstein (1999) notices that M. Foucault's works are of importance to the practice professions because there are studied only ideas as they exist in actual practice, and there are studied practices as they have been played out and as they created the ideas associated with the practices. "By playing around with these ideas, we get hold of a framework for considering the nature of the social sciences, the nature of the helping disciplines, and the nature of their practices", as she used to say (Ibid., p. 13).

Moreover M. Foucault has brought together into a single fold the two poles of the social work profession that are traditionally kept apart, the micro- and macrolevels of the person and the environment. A. S. Chambon (1999, p. 56) points out that M. Foucault has made visible the linkages between person and society: how industrial practices generate social identities. It opens new ways of understanding. Further the author continues the analysis of the Foucault's ideas' application in social work research by pointing out that Foucault's works are characterized by their close examination of practices and unearthing of daily details, what is highly compatible with social work (Ibid., p. 60). By examining concrete practices in their most details, social workers question institutional mechanisms and gain a new understanding. A. S. Chambon (1999) refers to M. Richmond's (1917) ideas and states that detailed documentation is necessary to build a case. Social workers do more than inquire in their everyday practice. They sift through evidence in clients' lives. They assess, weigh, and discard sets of information. As they collect data, they simultaneously draw inferences and interpret their findings.

From the social constructivism perspective, social work can be understood as a discourse which socially constructs subjects of social work. The social work discourse defines what a client is, what a social worker is, and the rules for their interaction (Naujaniene, 2007, p. 25). In *Archaeology of Knowledge* (2005), M. Foucault proposes that most discourses are governed by rules and principles of exclusion that include prohibition, power, ritual, the privileged right to speak, the appeal to reason, and the will to truth. Rephrasing G. S. Cannella (1999, p. 38), we know that in a social work community we are not free to say just anything; some ideas and practices have been excluded. Professional competence in social work has been shaping within the assumptions that have grounded social work discourse, to name a few:

- 1) A client and a social worker are the main agents in a social work setting.
- 2) A need for a certain competence.
- 3) Help in facing personal challenges and creating fully functioning life in society.
- 4) Multi-faced activity (nature of social work).
- 5) Belief in the ability to empower a person to deal with personal problems.
- 6) Performance analysis (reflection).

2. Research methodology

I reveal social work's professionalization by analyzing elements constructing the profession: the historical social context (due to the limited scope the article does not develop this aspect; more widely this aspect is analyzed in my previous articles: Mačiulskytė, Dirgėlienė, 2010; Mačiulskytė, 2011), social work practice, scientific research, training of social workers and professional language.

There is presented a research in the article which is based on Foucauldian discourse analysis method. As I. Parker (2003) describes, discourse analysis treats the social world as a text, or rather as a system of texts which can be systematically 'read' by a researcher to lay open the social process that lie within them. Starting point of discourse analysis method is acknowledgement of the diversity of meaning; the different, sometimes contradictory ways of speaking that govern what we do (and who we can be). Meaning is continually changing (it is dynamic), and language is composed of many 'languages' or discourses (Ibid., p. 92–93).

Foucauldian discourse analysis method captures a historical perspective and explores the ways in which 'languages' or discourses have been changing over time, and how this may have been shaping historical subjectivities (Willig, 2004). However, applied historical perspective is not understood from any linear chronological narration of dates and personalities, books written, organisations started, and cultural influences noted. That history has to be discovered, narrated, and interpreted. The origins need to be understood because the myths have made important events and thoughts vanish from consideration (Epstein, 1999, p. 15).

Discourse analysis method doesn't aim to account for every aspect of a phenomenon but purposefully chooses to trace selective patterns and collects only those sets of features associated with them:

There can be no question here of writing the history of the different disciplinary institutions with all their individual differences. I simply intend to map on a series of examples some of the essential techniques that most easily spread from one to another (Foucault, 1995; cited in Chambon, 1999, p. 60).

The method pays attention to the relationship between discourses and institutions. Here, *languages* or discourses are not conceptualized simply as ways of speaking or writing, as C. Willig (2004, p. 171) notices. They are bound with institutional practices, i.e. with ways of organising, regulating and administering social life. Discourse analysis method is suitable for detailed practice analysing; M. Foucault himself has focused his studies and analysis on the details of practices. He has made no conventional distinctions between the theory and practice of the helping disciplines, as L. Epstein (1999) likes to call all disciplines, which purpose – to help people, including social work, – rolling the two into one. Foucault applied the discourse analysis method to examine instead practices and local circumstances: not institutions, but institutional practices; not ideology but statements; not the "subject" but the embodied subject (Chambon, 1999, p. 56). Thus, while discourses legitimate and reinforce existing social and institutional practices, these practices, in turn, also support and validate the discourses. For example, being positioned as 'the client'

within a social care discourse means that one's living conditions, and life in general, become objects of legitimate interest to social workers, that they may be studied, tested, and invaded in the process of social services' provision which forms part of the practice of social work and its institutions (see also Willig, 2004, p. 172).

Discourse analysis is concerned with language and language use; however its interest in language takes it beyond the immediate contexts within which language may be used by speaking subjects. Usually the method applies questions about the relationship between discourses and how people think or feel (subjectively), what they may do (practices) and the material conditions within which such experiences may take place.

All these aspects of discourse analysis method are highly comparable with close examination of social work professionalization.

Performing the research I based on the provision formed by Lithuanian and foreign authors that modern social work didn't exist up to 1990 in Lithuania. The appearance of social work in Lithuania is associated with the early independence period of 1990–1992 (Ritchie, 2003; Jurkuvienė, 2003; Tunney, Kulys, 2004).

Since life is *text-sutured*, as A. Luke (1995) likes to say, every waking moment is caught up in engagement with text of some kind: from children's story to political speech, I have referred to *texts* when carrying out my research: policy documents, legislation, speeches, scientific articles, working papers, and so on. The documents, chosen for analysis in this research, covering the period from the first act related to social work in Lithuania, which came into force in 1992, till 2012, when *The Social Work Studies Field Description* was announced. The scientific output – articles, books, project material – which deals with the problem of social work in Lithuania and which was issued during that period is also analyzed. These sources reveal the social work profession's birth and development. Those 'texts' reveal Lithuanian social work discourse represented in circumscriptions what it is possible to say, know and do, but also establishments what kind of person one is entitled (obliged) to *be* in order to operate those *texts*. The point here is that words accumulate different resonances according to the institutions and discourses from which they emanate, and the institutional and social location of those who are making or critiquing them (MacLure, 2003, p. 16). As M. Bakhtin (1981) puts it, "all words have the "taste" of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life" (cited in MacLure, 2003).

3. Social work and the development of social regulation

Social work's role in the welfare state is a special one. As N. Parton (1999, p. 112) notices, social work mainly provides an important but ambiguous strategy to enable "government at a distance" or indirect methods of social regulation, to take place. Developed welfare state creates and maintains the social work to solve all unusual cases (differing from accepted norm). In this respect, social workers perform the function of social control normalization, because they have to restore the client's ability to live according to usual norms of society (Gvaldaitė, Švedaitė, 2005, p. 19–

20). “Government at a distance” creates the image of maintaining autonomous free individual who is governed at the same time. This is a normal social regulation tool in a developed welfare state.

To talk about *governmentality* and institutionalization it always involves a power issue. Power in the discourse of social work can’t be pinpointed, and thus separated and isolated from public welfare institutions, such as social agencies, common lodging-houses, foster homes, also schools, hospitals, prisons, and it is ubiquitous as a productive factor (Andersen, 2003, p. 3). However, power, in the Foucauldian sense, is not something that one person or powerful group ‘has’ and wealds against weaker opponents. Power is diffuse, circulating in a capillary fashion around and through institutions, reaching “into the very grain” of those who are made subjects through their involvement in discourse – social workers, clients, therapists, claimants, and so on (MacLure, 2003, p. 176). N. A. Andersen (2003, p. 3) adds that, for example, criminality and illness are discursive positions, which are established with the intent to control.

The growth of social work in Lithuania is interrelated with the development of social interventions, associated with the establishment of the welfare state. Both the one and the other is developing consistently creating and improving its instruments in historical and cultural context. Major Lithuanian socio-cultural context feature is obviously post-communism. Post-communist mentality in the early stage of the welfare state development manifested in passive labor policies; by the provision of social services at home for usual for Communist times client groups; monetary contribution-based social support; shabby social services package. Social care quality for a long time was measured only by technical parameters (square meters given per person, the number of bed clothing sets given per year and so on). Personal satisfaction with an emphasis on the quality of life was forgotten (Social Report 2007–2008, 2008).

Post-communist mentality gives priority to direct power use. That responds essentially not only to the actions of social workers, but to social work methods too. Solving the problem of families at risk as a social phenomenon the discourse of exclusion was prevailing for a long time: risk families were included in “black” list of social services, often limiting parents’ right to children; children were given to custodian care, more than every third child was taken to institutional custody. Thus, within a relatively short period of time the number of social risk families rose to 18,672 with 42,820 children growing in them. Institutionalized care created the conditions to flourish old social problems and for emergence of new ones (Social Report 2000, 2001). One half of the problems were associated with the child and with social risk family: the work with the child starts when a child enters care institution. Care institutions in official discourse for some time are seen as educational institutions where teachers apply intensive educational measures to correct the socialization *mistakes* of the care institution inhabitants. Educational discourse sends the message that strict education measures and discipline must help the child to reintegrate into the society and to ensure its continued positive social development. It is believed that education should help to solve other social problems of the child. Meanwhile, the main source of problems appearing in social risk families did not receive the attention

they deserved: parents and guardians were punished by limiting their parental rights, but in general nobody worked with them.

A mature (developed) social work practice was hardly possible. People working in the social sphere – former teachers, engineers, technologists, chemists, etc. – had to deal with new social problems here and now, on the basis of personal qualities and life experience, which they gained nowhere else but in the Communist political system. The lack of professional social workers, the first steps approaching to the creation of the welfare state, accompanied by an inherited post-communist mentality, which had formed the view that the political system and social guarantees itself protected the individual from social problems (Leliūgienė et al., 2006, p. 64), and that it was possible to solve the existing problems by cash benefits, did not allow the social work to be able *to govern at a distance*. Some social processes were controlled with great difficulty, and some – out of control completely.

In a Foucauldian approach, meanings of social work practice are produced by power/knowledge configurations, as these are embedded in and constructed of different social institutions. Besides, power is invested with knowledge. *Governance at a distance* approach started to be noticed when professional social workers started to enter the labor market: the variety of social services expanded, the spectrum of social groups, entering the social work field, also expanded. For example, in probation system the opportunities are expanded for persons, who have convicted offenses against society, not only to be punished by restricting their freedom, but the alternative forms of punishment are also considered. Of course, the element of punishment remains; but the alternative measures to imprisonment start being applied. The attitudes and working methods with social risk families start to change: beginning to work in an integrated way, focusing the means of intervention to the work with the whole family, trying to keep children in biological families. Since 2002 when the NGO child day care centers' programme was started till 2010 the number of social risk families has decreased by 42 percent, and the number of children growing in them decreased by 40 percent (Social Report 2010–2011, 2011). This decline is caused by a significant extension of the range and the volume of social services in the municipalities, by child day care centers' activities and by changing the very concept of social risk family. The expansion of non-steady-state social services development has economic and social regulation effect. As N. Parton (1999) would say, referring to N. Rose and P. Miller (1992), the growth and strengthening of welfare state reflects a particular form of government through which a variety of political forces seek to secure social and economic objectives by linking up a plethora of networks with aspirations to know, programme and transform the social field (Ibid., p. 113).

Has the post-communism disappeared from Lithuanian social work in 2012? No, it still exists in social work practice, but people learned to hide it, as they understand that the post-communist practice is contrary to the official discourse. It is still noticed by foreigners and the people, who are outside the social work practice. Especially post-communist discourse is viable in continuing social work institutions (e.g. various custody homes).

Professional knowledge is the diffuse power what creates visible through social agencies and invisible but tight enough net to regulate particular groups' behaviour. Social and governmental effect expands the field of professional domination. Particular forms of knowledge, characteristic to a particular profession, are more sophisticated, more informed, not appropriate for those who are outside it. The knowledge of particular groups/persons are excluded and labelled inferior to others, whether because of being viewed as having less experience or dependent, less well read, new to a field, and on and on.

4. Disciplinarity of social work

For social work to operate quietly and in an uncontested way, it requires a supportive social mandate and an internal professional confidence and coherence (Parton, 1999). B. Pease and J. Fook (1999, p. 14) specify that social work practice confines social workers to a particular knowledge base. That knowledge base can be achieved both *via* special system of training and long practice. To talk about special training involves a discipline issue.

Discipline trains, individualizes regiments and makes docile and obedient subjects (Macdonell, 1986; cited in MacLure, 2003, p. 176). M. Foucault (1998) used to say, that "discipline is a principle which controls the production of discourse. It sets the frames of discourse by using identity's playfulness, which gained the shape of constant actualization of the rules" (Ibid., p. 24). N. Parton (1999) notices that social work as discipline institutes a regime of power exercised through disciplinary mechanisms and the stipulation of norms for human behaviour (Ibid., p. 107; see also G. S. Cannella [1999], she writes about disciplinary technologies in education). Social work is also inextricably linked to the disciplines that regularize and normalize the conduct of those who are brought within the ambit of those institutions. This leads to particular way for acting, "to claim resources, to control or to be controlled" (Burr, 1995; cited in Naujanienė, 2007, p. 26). The control element in social work is revealed through *a need for a certain competence*, entrenched by the systems of licensing and training, and the life under the conditions of constant changes requires special preparation.

Professional development goes on with the assistance of formal education. Speaking about social work as a discipline the studies (*education*) is being emphasized, speaking about social work as the profession and practical activity vocational training (*training*) is being emphasized (Pivorienė, 2003, p. 38). Pivorienė (2003; see also Alifanovienė, 2002; Jurkuvienė, 2003; Naujanienė, 2007; etc.) generally takes the position that social work in Lithuania formally began with social work training. V. Kavaliauskienė (2005) states that aspirations to professionalize social work is a natural process of a liberal market economy, and this process is greatly influenced by people, who are interested in working in the field of social work and make their living from this activity.

Education of social workers in Lithuania was intensively studied for a decade since the launch of the first re-training programme at Vytautas Magnus University. The emergence and formation of a new discipline in Lithuania caused a lot of discussions:

What is social work? What knowledge, skills and character qualities are necessary for future social worker? How to train a professional social worker? It is obvious that if we lack the experience in this field we shall take it, but from whom? Which country's experience is the most effective in Lithuanian context? And, in general, is there a need to train people for such activities, if the social worker is essentially providing the same assistance in solving everyday social problems, which naturally provides family members, neighbours, religious community or random people who do not have special education and do that free of charge (Švedaitė, 2004)? On the other hand the post-communist inheritance and the uncertainty resulting from it were still annoying: in 7th - 8th decades of the 20th century there appeared people organizing children's after-school activities, adult's after-work activities, people working in the spheres of culture, health, law enforcement, trade unions; all this was done by people of different occupations (Alifanovienė, 2002), so was there a need for a separate profession after all when these functions could be performed by anyone, and what could be seen at that time in the country's social welfare system?

The need to find the answers to these questions encouraged Lithuanian education institutions of different levels to join into networks, to initiate international projects (such as, for example, the Tempus project "Social Educators / Social Workers Interdisciplinary Education and Training", 1996–1999; Leonardo da Vinci programme "The Standard of Social Work Training for Colleges", 1998–2000; Phare, the Netherlands and Norway programme "Social Work Training programme in Utena Medical School", 1996–1998; etc.), and that allowed to "investigate" the experience of various Western countries, mainly of Western Europe in social work *education* and *training* field. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour invited foreign experts who helped to investigate the field of social work in Lithuania (Helsinki and Lapland Universities funded project "Training of Social Workers in Lithuania", 1996–1998). A lot of scientists from abroad, especially from the United States, used to work in Vytautas Magnus University during the first decade of social workers' education; in addition to regular studies Social Work Institute organized *Summer School* for local social work students, lecturers and practitioners. Students, teachers, professionals exchange under the Socrates / Erasmus programme, scientific-methodical literature items also contributed to the professionalization of social work process. In such a way the network of social workers training in higher education institutions has been developed in Lithuania and complemented by the licensing and training institutions, but still there are great differences among the schools that are teaching social work. On one hand higher schools prepared and implemented the programmes of social work training having experience in various fields (e.g., special education, management, law) (Pivorienė, 2003; Leliūgienė et al., 2006). At the beginning social work lecturers were and student research projects evaluated the specialists of various social sciences, not social work professionals. Scientific knowledge of sociology, education, medicine, psychology and other disciplines have been shaping social work professional identity. On the other hand, this is related with the situation that social work conceptual positions, content, and practice is imported, i.e. social work schools in different higher schools have developed their educational curricula with the support of experts from

different countries: mainly from the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, The Netherlands, and Scandinavian countries. However, disciplinarity constructs invisible power, silently creating individuals as bodies to be controlled and evaluated. The need to agree on certain standards for training of social workers emerged. *The Lithuanian Association of Schools of Social Work* was founded for possibility to maintain systematic dialog.

Another question which caused a lot of discussions concerning the education of social workers during first decade was related to competition of two social care professions for recognition. The seed of social work in Lithuania grew up not in empty social assistance field. The discipline of social pedagogy started the conquest of social regulation niche in Lithuania somewhat earlier. Its goal is to help individuals and groups to overcome barriers of social exclusion, to provide them with social and educational assistance in overcoming the consequences of socio-educational – educational separation (Juodaitytė, 2007, p. 76). In the most general sense, the goals of social work and social pedagogy activity substantially overlap. It is hard for social work to compete only having the basis of more practical activity, while social pedagogy uses the results of education science (Leliūgienė et al., 2006). However, nowadays social work develops rapidly, supported by the growing and becoming stronger community of professionals. Important assumption is namely the lack of traditional scientific heritage. Social pedagogy constrained by traditional scientific heritage lacks flexibility and its development has slowed down or even stopped.

Scientific substantiation is perceived as a key element in social work education, thus Lithuanian representatives of social work from the very birth of social work are active to ensure a favorable environment for the scientific foundation for social work development: specialized scientific periodicals are published (Mykolas Romeris University publishes *Social Work* (since 2002), Vilnius University – *STEPP: social theory, empiricity, policy and practice* (since 2001), Vytautas Magnus University – *Social Work. Practices and Methods* (since 2008). To tell the truth, the representatives of social work still fail to achieve that social work to be recognized as a separate research field in Lithuanian scientific disciplines and fields classification: this question is being temporarily solved when training social work field doctors abroad (University of Lapland, Finland).

The efforts to maintain the social work and social pedagogy as separate support providing occupations reflected in the preparation of individual specialists' training standards (*Social Worker Training Standard* (2000, 2008), *The Social Work Study Field Description* (2012), *Social Educator Training Standards* (2002, 2008)); individual qualification requirements (*Social Educator's Job Description* (2001), *Social Workers and Social Workers' Assistants Qualification Requirements* (2006). There were long discussions about social work and social pedagogy identity and perspectives, and finally I. Leliūgienė et al. (2006, p. 71) stated that "the provision that the social worker and social educator are integral and complementing each other professions established itself in specialists training". It was a kind of cease-fire announcement, which allowed at that time to focus on social assistance occupations strengthening by cooperation.

D. Schon (1991) emphasizes that in order to achieve good professional results it is necessary to have, continuous practice renewal and deep reflection of practice (cited in Naujanienė, 2010, p. 65). The tradition of social work professionalization through strengthening the internal capacity of the profession came to Lithuania from abroad. Supervision as the method of professional consulting has become an important element for ensuring the quality of social work, and helping to construct a clearly recognizable identity of the social work profession.

5. Social work professionalization and language

Discourse analysis study draws attention to the language. The language is seen as constructive – as actually creating, negotiating and changing meaning. In general, discourse is understood as a configuration of language that produces certain outcomes (Humphries, 2008, p. 120–121). N. Parton (2002) argues that because there is a range of different contexts, cultures and discourses available at any time and place, there is also a plethora of different meanings, knowledge and truths available and many experiences and interpretations of self and identity. The language does not simply reflect or mirror objects, events and categories existing in the social and natural world – it actively *constructs* those things. Words do not simply describe things; they *do* things and thus have social and political meaning (Ibid., p. 241). Lengthy utterances, phrases, clauses or even single words are used methodologically in everyday interaction to achieve particular ends (Humphries, 2008).

The development of social work as a profession, discipline, and science is reflected in changing professional language used in everyday social work practice, in policy documents, in legislation, in speech, and so on. Colloquial, often stigmatizing concepts are being changed into concepts carrying positive information about a person or situation, or at least into neutral concepts. New interpellations of social problems constructed by language gradually penetrate and change post-communist societal mentality. The official ideology denied the existence of social phenomenon – poverty, unemployment, disability, addiction, infectious diseases, and others phenomena – in Communist totalitarian state: the homeless and the unemployed were punished, the disabled and people with addiction, infectious diseases were institutionalized, isolated, and forcibly treated. However, the applied measures did not and could not be effective because only the drawbacks were seen as the objects of these measures. The official, as well as the colloquial speech was full of expressions such as *tramp*, *prisoner*, *alcoholic*, *cripple*, *druggie*, *phthisisist*, *anti-social*, *dysfunctional family*, and so on. The political systems are changing faster than the stable value systems such as mentality. During the first decade of the Independence, as well as of social work in Lithuania there were a lot of such concepts in interpersonal communication, in social work services' provision, in policy documents, in legislation, in speeches, everywhere.

The changes start running up after 2000: the attitude towards the *other* changes significantly together with the language and vice versa. Gradually the term “cripple” is changed into “disabled” in professional social work language, later – in the official language and finally public language. The new version of *Social Integration of*

Persons with Disabilities Law, which was approved in 2004, had only changed the title of the document, changing the concept of “cripple” into “disabled”. Having realized, according to P. Jucevičienė (2001), G. Kvieskienė and V. Indrašienė (2008) that contemporary social work must not only solve the client's problem, but also enable the person to modify his activity effectively, social worker started to look for client's personal powers, which, woken up by social worker, can cause positive changes. Disabled people started to get not the level of disability, but the level of reduction in capability. *Dysfunctional family* gradually became *problematic family* and now the concept of *social risk family* is being used; *prisoners* and *ex-prisoners* became *persons, who are imprisoned* or *who came back from imprisonment*; *alcoholics, drug addicts* became *people, who have addiction problems*. These changes reveal the efforts to believe in human-being's inborn personal power to improve or solve his personal problems.

In M. Foucault tradition it is related to looking for *truth* and entrenching it, maintained through repeated discursive work that ensure that application of social work paradigm to solve today's social problems in Lithuania is seen as acceptable or even preeminent in comparison with other support providing professions. M. Foucault (1980, p. 31) defines *truth* as the one which „includes regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics of truth’: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures according value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true”. The key question, rephrasing S. Mills (1997), is not what *truth* is or what statement is more effective, but how the truth and authority of one is continuously produced (cited in MacLure, 2003, p. 178). That points the other general principle of Foucauldian analysis, that of ‘an exteriority’: conditions of social work practice existence, appearance and regularity.

The truth is what is practiced and supported: the desire of social work representatives to fight their place under the sun, together with the older support providing professions, encourages to unite and to build a strong profession from “the inside”. Professional language reflects the maturity of professional ethics. Ethics – is the system of moral behaviour standards which are followed by the society. In social work, ethics is related to the observance of the rules, accepted in social work practice. Practitioners themselves are interested to behave ethically in their professional sphere, because, otherwise, it could ruin their careers, raising doubts about the effectiveness and legality of their activity. This is why even at the beginning of social work in Lithuania (1994) *Lithuanian Association of Social Workers* was founded, which in 1997 prepared and approved the *Lithuanian Social Worker's Code of Ethics*, which is in force until now.

Analyzing the sources of 20 years period it is possible to reveal different rates and different *vision* of social work as practical activity, academic subject and science development. Political, formal, declarative discourse based on statistical indicators dominates in *Social Reports*, what are (non)formal annual reports of the activity of

Ministry of Social Security and Labor: “556 working places for social workers to work with social risk families were established in the municipalities in 2007” (Social Report 2007–2008, 2008) and so on. The impression is that social work as a practical activity in Lithuania is developing very rapidly and shows impressive results. Since these are activity reports, the information is provided, trying to demonstrate the progress using “before – after” principle: (1) the rise of professional field coverage: “Until 2000 the help-at-home services were provided mainly for old, elderly and disabled people, living alone. Analyzing the clients of this service in 2000, (...) this service has begun to be provided for disabled children from families with social problems, for people from risk groups and their family members, and so on.” (Social Report 2000, 2001); (2) attention to the quality criterion in various spheres of social work activity: “In Lithuania, as [post-communist – auth.] country, the quality of social care for a long period of time was measured only on technical parameters (...) Person’s satisfaction, emphasizing the quality of his life, has been forgotten” (Social Report 2007–2008, 2008) and so on. Official, declarative discourse is built on faith and trust in the power of legislation to resolve the unsatisfactory situation and by formal procedures “in order to facilitate the situation of social workers without proper education and of former children’s social care home educators and to ensure that they are entitled to perform the function of social worker after 1st of July 2011, the retraining process of the workers mentioned started in May 2010 (...)” (Social Report 2010–2011, 2011). The social care institutions licensing process which started in the end of 2010 revealed that the results of the retraining process of *social workers without proper education and of former children’s social care home educator* are not as optimistic as they were promised to be in official sources: formally the retraining was done, the workers retained their jobs, but the values, which largely contribute to social care quality criteria, were affected just a little.

The analysis of working academic and scientific sources revealed significantly slower development of social work as the discipline and as science. In 2001 A. Bagdonas writes that although “the concept of social work and social workers became common, and not unusual, [but] (...) it is too early to talk about Lithuanian social work” (Ibid, p. 10). The Lithuanian scientific publications on social work topics only start appearing much more often during this period. Until 2005–2006 scientific publications dealt only with just conceptual issues in social work (A. Bagdonas “Practical and Academic aspects of social work development in Lithuania” [2001]; P. Jucevičienė “Integrated view on theory and practice of social work – an answer to the human challenge of the 21st century” [2001]; D. Alifanovienė “Technological process of social work” [2002]; J. Pivorienė “Social work and research: search for definition” [2003], “From early philanthropy to professional social work” [2004]; V. Kavaliauskienė “Aspects of the development of social work as a helping profession” [2005] and so on). By 2003–2004 there were still attempts to defend in a way social work positions among other social professions (R. Jurkuvienė “Social Work Schools as social innovations in Lithuania” [2003]). Two major projects (the preparation of social work field doctoral dissertations at the University of Lapland (Finland) and supervisions studies, initiated by the Academy of Münster (Germany)),

which were started to be implemented in 2004, extended the Lithuanian scientific research in social work field. The problem field of scientific social work research is expanding; we find more and more scientific publications on a variety of social work practice issues: social work methods, a variety of features of social work client groups, professional relationship counseling (supervision) and other issues.

Answering the questions

Having started this research, I raised two questions. It is time to summarize the answers.

The first question was initiated by the rapid development of social work as profession in Lithuania and by the fact that social services policies appeared to establish a new discursive regime. I wanted to describe this regime and it's shaping; I was not interested in criticising it from a normative position. That's what I realised: social work ideas are embedded in Lithuanian social, cultural, political, economic environment and maintained by the public ability to accumulate and multiply them. Primary ideas about modern social work are *imported*; along with the development of social work schools' network, the generation of the ideas have been started, and acquire power in the welfare state: more the welfare state is developed and more important role plays in the state's ability *to govern at a distance*, the faster they spread and are more supported by the public.

Second, social work develops as practice, discipline and science. Analysing various sets of sources about social work in Lithuania (official documents, working academic papers, research papers, and scientific sources), the contradictions in assessing and interpreting social work's development pace, scale, quality and authenticity become apparent. Official, political discourse, reflected in legislation, official notices and reports relies more on quantitative parameters, stuffed into a "before – after" frames, declares the rapid development of social work practice. Social work as a discipline has moved to the qualitative development phase, when the net of social work schools enlarged and when social work was included in the classification of basic professions. Meanwhile, the scientific discourse reveals a much smaller and slower progress of Lithuanian social work.

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